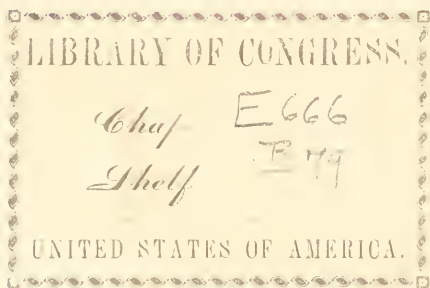




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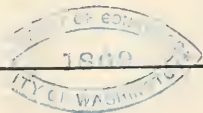
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



The Results of the Presidential Election.

SPEECH
OF
HON. BENJAMIN M. BOYER,
OF PENNSYLVANIA,
IN
REPLY TO HON. JAMES G. BLAINE;
DELIVERED
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
JANUARY 8, 1869.



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The Results of the Presidential Election.

The House being in Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union—

Mr. BOYER said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The issues supposed to have been settled by the election of General Grant to the Presidency formed the subject of an elaborate speech by the honorable gentleman from Maine [Mr. BLAINE] a few days before the adjournment of Congress for the holidays in December. The assumptions of the gentleman on that occasion, which differ materially from my own conclusions, have suggested the brief remarks which I propose to make upon this the first opportunity I have had for a reply. Nor is this an idle discussion; for what has been clearly and fairly determined by a general election ought to be acquiesced in as the declared will of the people, binding upon the minority and regulating the official duty of those elected by the majority.

The late presidential election decided, of course, that the Republican party should continue to administer the Government through an elected Chief Magistrate of their own choice and a majority of the Forty-First Congress. But it settled scarcely anything else than what is practically inseparable from such a result. The election, in fact, turned upon a false and imaginary issue, as I shall presently show, by which the Republican party succeeded in avoiding a direct verdict of the people upon the real questions involved in the policy upon which they had administered the Government. By the same means they avoided, as far as possible, committal upon any question which could

be referred to the future. As an example of the latter, as well as an illustration of the unwarranted assumptions of the gentleman from Maine, take the subject of the finances. In the speech to which I have adverted the gentleman said "the election of General Grant has settled the financial question." Settled it how? Why, says the gentleman, "it has settled that the public debt shall be paid in the utmost good faith, according to the letter and spirit of the contract."

This, to be sure, is in the very words of the Chicago platform, and neither more nor less explicit. But when and by what party was it ever made a question whether the national debt should not be paid in the utmost good faith and according to the letter and spirit of the contract? What is good faith and what the letter and spirit of the contract are the very points of the controversy, and upon these the Republican platform and the enunciations of General Grant leave us as much as ever in the dark. The late Thaddeus Stevens, whose leadership of the Republican majority in this House was conspicuous, and who was in his lifetime as much entitled to speak for the Republican party as the gentleman from Maine, declared in one of his last speeches in this Hall that the Republican platform meant that "the bloated bondholders," as he styled the holders of five-twenties, should be paid in currency and not in gold. But this, says Horace Greeley, is "villainy." And so thinks the gentleman from Maine. On the other hand, an honorable Senator, [Mr. MORRIS], a high Repub-

lican authority, and prominently named even for the Secretaryship of the Treasury under the new Administration, maintains that to pay the bonds in currency is a clear legal right according to the contract. The gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. BUTLER,] who will concede nothing in Republican orthodoxy even to the gentleman from Maine, goes further, and says that to pay in greenbacks is not only a legal right but a moral duty.

In reference to the question touching the resumption of specie payment we discover the same confusion among the Republican oracles. "Let resumption come at once," says the venerable editor of the Tribune in his late letter addressed to the distinguished Republican Senator already referred to. "Wages must fall, property sell cheaper or be unsalable, the sheriff and constable be after many of us. We must suffer any how. But," continues he with heroic emphasis, "I prefer to take the plunge at once and be done with it." "But," retorts the honorable Senator, "you may be ready to make the plunge, but the great body of the people are not. Postpone till 1871." "Postpone indefinitely," says the gentleman from Massachusetts. It appears from this that the interpretation of the settlement of the financial question by the election of General Grant is attended with as much confusion of tongues as prevailed among the artificers of Babel. The fact is that the election has left the financial question practically where it found it. All that the election has certainly settled in relation thereto is that the party which has swelled the national debt by unprecedented extravagance and deranged the currency by unwise legislation shall, for at least two years longer, shoulder the responsibility of providing a remedy. The financial elephant, for the present, is their prize. So much of finance has been settled by the election of General Grant, and nothing more.

The gentleman lays it down as an inevitable consequence of General Grant's election that negro suffrage must be accepted as a permanent establishment in the southern States, "and at no distant day throughout the entire Union." Yet if negro suffrage, which is the very corner-stone of Radical reconstruction, had been divested of all other issues and fairly

submitted to the vote of the whole people, what man acquainted with the national sentiment will deny that its defeat would have been overwhelming? No other proof is needed to establish this proposition than the decisive vote upon this question when lately presented by itself in several of the great Republican States of the North and the continued exclusion of negroes from the polls in nearly all of them.

It is said, however, that negro suffrage "is of necessity conceded as one of the essentials of reconstruction." But has the Radical policy of reconstruction itself been so approved and established that it can never be disturbed by future elections? Is there nothing to be apprehended from the continued violation of natural laws and a possible collision of races? Are the reconstruction laws themselves so firmly intrenched upon constitutional grounds that a general revulsion of feeling among the superior race might not find a ready excuse for sweeping from its foundations the whole work of Radical reconstruction? Radicalism has not itself been overscrupulous in the use of means. Usurpation is a dangerous game for any party to play if it would have its work outlast the passions from which it derived its power to tyrannize and proscribe.

Of course, the late elections have continued in the hands of the Republican party the power to enforce their policy for two years longer. But now, since the election of General Grant has in the eyes of all men insured the safety of the Union, there will be less excuse for sectional and personal proscription. Those caricatures of republican government imposed by the stranger and the negro upon the disfranchised white race of the South had become abhorrent to the public mind of the North long before the late presidential election. But the shadowy ghost of an extinct rebellion filled the popular imagination with false alarms and frightened it from that forgiveness which had become both safe and merciful. In so far, therefore, as the late elections have continued the power of Radicalism it was a verdict extorted from the fears of the people rather than their judgment upon the merits of the Radical policy. Public confidence turned to Grant as the unsuspected representative of a triumphant Union, and the Republican party was

saved through him alone. Had he been the candidate of the Opposition, whom could radicalism have elected over him? Look to the October elections. Let the imminent danger which threatened radicalism, even with Grant as its candidate, answer the question. No other name given under heaven among men could have saved the Republican party from overwhelming defeat and final condemnation. Was it because Grant was the representative of Radicalism that worked this great salvation? Everybody knows better. Radicalism had been already repudiated, as the State and municipal elections in the North had for two years indicated. Even after the sagacious nomination at Chicago the handwriting was still seen on the wall. Even over against the name of Grant, resplendent as it was with military glory, the gathering cloud of threatened disaster lowered. There were names before the Democratic National Convention at New York which thrilled with apprehension the Republican heart every time the electric wires flashed through the land the Democratic roll-call of the States.

I shall not pause to review the blunders from which others reaped a harvest which they did not sow. Nor shall I calculate how many grains of common sense were needed in the balance in which Democratic victory was that day weighted down. I only refer to the irrevocable past for the lesson which it teaches to your party, Mr. Chairman, rather than to mine. The argument which I desire to draw from it is this: that the elements of Republican success at the late elections were derived from other sources than the popular approval of the Radical policy. It was the misfortune of my party, Mr. Chairman, to expose itself to misrepresentation. It was the fortune of yours to take advantage of it, and to be permitted to inscribe with popular approbation the winning words, "Let us have peace" upon the banners of the party which had for nearly four years in a time of profound peace continued the worst consequences of war. But the glaring contradiction was not regarded, and everywhere the Republican press and the Republican orators proclaimed to the people that the real question was whether the rebellion should be renewed by a victorious Democracy, or peace and union insured by the election of

General Grant. And now, having answered its purpose, false and imaginary as the issue was, I insist that it shall be held within the scope of its logical application, and I maintain that nothing ought to be considered as settled by the election of General Grant except that the rebellion shall not be renewed.

But, said the gentleman from Maine, rising higher in his flight toward the regions of pure imagination, "With the election of General Grant comes a higher standard of American citizenship, with more dignity and character to the name abroad and more assured liberty and security attaching to it at home." High sounding phrases, indeed. But no new standard of citizenship has been set up by General Grant, and if we are compelled to seek for this boasted standard of American citizenship in the reconstruction policy of Congress, what do we find? Taking up the latest illustration of Radical reconstruction, the constitution just prepared and ready to be fastened upon the people of Virginia, (twenty-five thousand of whom are excluded from the polls this day,) I read in it that no inhabitant of that State shall hold any State office unless he first takes an oath to recognize and accept the political equality of the negro. Neither shall any one who will not take this oath be qualified to serve on a jury.

I find in the constitution of Alabama, rejected by the people of that State, but afterward, nevertheless, imposed upon them by Congress, the same oath prescribed as a condition precedent to the registration of a voter. The same test for the qualification of a voter exists in Arkansas and in Louisiana, and in the constitution proposed for Mississippi, the temporary rejection of which has led to the continued exclusion of the latter State from representation in Congress. Georgia having been admitted to representation, is now threatened with expulsion unless she will allow negroes to sit in her Legislature.

In some form in all the reconstructed States of the South fidelity to the dogma of a party is thus made the test of American citizenship. Upon condition of allegiance to the Republican party, however, all former rebels against the Government, however red-handed, are to be forgiven and exalted. The constitution of Arkansas, for example, provides that certain

classes of ex-rebels shall not register as voters, including those, in express terms, who during the late rebellion violated the rules of civilized warfare. But all of them shall vote notwithstanding, even those who, in violation of the rules of civilized warfare, deliberately murdered Union prisoners in cold blood, or helped to destroy them by lingering tortures in prison pens, "provided"—and I now quote the very words of the constitution approved by Congress—"provided that all persons included," &c., (in the disfranchised classes) "who have openly advocated, or who have voted for the reconstruction proposed by Congress, and accept the equality of all men before the law shall be deemed qualified electors under this constitution."

If we turn to the constitution of Louisiana we find similar proscriptions and pardons. No traitor is there too black for Radical absolution provided he will swear that the negro is his political equal, and he can ventilate his loyalty under that clause of the Louisiana constitution which takes all the disfranchised Radicals out of the lists of the proscribed by the accommodating proviso "that no person who, prior to the 1st of January, 1863, favored the execution of the laws of the United States popularly known as the reconstruction acts of Congress, and openly and actively assisted the loyal men of the State (to wit, the Radicals) in their efforts to restore Louisiana to her position in the Union, shall be held to be included among those herein excepted." Among the proscribed I find those who in the advocacy of the rebellion wrote or published a newspaper article or preached a sermon during the war. They shall not vote in Louisiana unless they are in favor of the reconstruction policy of Congress, and swear to the doctrine of negro equality. But they who, in the advocacy of treason, wrote it in bloody characters with their swords and preached sermons against the Union through the cannon's mouth, they shall, nevertheless, be clothed with all the attributes of citizenship in the State, provided they will swear allegiance to negro equality, and have been willing to aid in the enforcement of Radical reconstruction.

In further illustration of these sublime tests of loyalty and citizenship, in their operation

even upon northern men, let me suppose a case, of which there may be many examples now and likely to be many more hereafter. Suppose a northern citizen of the United States, who, as a volunteer soldier of the Union Army during the civil war, had done his share toward the redemption of our common country, and, with the idea of improving his fortunes, should emigrate to one of the southern States—to Arkansas, for example, or to Louisiana. After residing there the requisite time, suppose he were to offer to register as a voter. The first test of qualification to which he would be subjected would be the oath in favor of negro equality. If, by reason of his convictions of the unsoundness and impolicy of the doctrine of negro equality, he could not conscientiously take the oath, disfranchisement would be the inevitable penalty. Nor would a shattered constitution, broken down in the service of his country, nor a limb lost, it may be, in fighting the battles of the Union, save him from being driven from the polls. But not so would it happen under the new dispensation to the rebel who had shed the blood and shot off the limb of this disfranchised Union soldier. The rebel can vote, however red his hand has been with Union blood, provided he is willing to swear that he is politically no better than a negro, and has advocated and voted for the reconstruction policy of Congress. Beneath the level of such a yoke, and through such partisan crevices must hundreds of thousands of disfranchised white men creep before they can become the political equals of the negro or make their present fidelity to their country of any avail.

Such are the new tests of loyalty and suffrage which Radical reconstruction has prescribed, exemplifying that higher standard of American citizenship which the gentleman from Maine so grandiloquently prefigured.

If such tenures is American citizenship held in more than ten States of the Federal Union. Such are the standards prescribed by a party which retains power by the votes of black barbarians and the wholesale disfranchisement of white conservatives. It can no longer be said that the three hundred thousand white men who have been stripped of their rights of citizenship by the acts of this Congress are thus

degraded because of their former rebellion. This will not be believed when enabling acts are constantly being passed by Congress removing the political disabilities of subservient rebels by hundreds and thousands, while from these bills of amnesty the name of every suspected conservative is first carefully expunged, as if he were afflicted with political leprosy. The iron-clad oath has long ago become but a spike upon which to impale conservatives. There are Representatives from southern States with seats on this floor, in full fellowship and communion with the Radical majority, from whose bodies the Union bullets have never been extracted, and who bear upon their persons the scars of wounds received in their desperate endeavors to capture and destroy this very Capitol where, as loyal men, they now sit in judgment. They succeeded in capturing the Capitol, not with rebel bullets, but by the aid of Radical ballots.

I have no charges to make against these gentlemen. I complain not of their presence here, for I am in favor of universal amnesty. But that they should be here to the exclusion of others, not by virtue of their obedience to the laws and their renewed allegiance to the Union, but solely because they have prostrated themselves before the Radical idol and shout the shibboleth of a party, conveys to the mind no very exalted idea of the advancing standard of impartial American citizenship.

To affirm that this condition of things has received the deliberate approval of either General Grant or of the majority which elected him I believe to be a slander against both.

Among those things lost with the "lost cause" by the defeat of Mr. Seymour, the gentleman enumerates what he is pleased to term "the paradise of State rights."

If, however, it be claimed as one of the results of the late election that States have no longer any rights which the Federal power is bound to respect, there will be many a fierce struggle before the party of centralization will be left in undisputed possession of the Government. Secession was a heresy which threatened the existence of the Union, but the denial to the States of those reserved rights which clearly lie on their side of the line, de-

fining the constitutional jurisdiction of the Federal authority, would destroy the symmetry and distinguishing excellence of our institutions, to preserve which would be worth as great a sacrifice as the suppression of the rebellion against the Union itself.

I know not through what future convulsions the ultimate destiny of the Republic is to be wrought out, nor how far the new President, naturally conservative and sagacious, may be willing and able to aid in the restoration of fraternal feeling and public confidence throughout all sections. I know not how successfully General Grant may be able to check the wasteful extravagance of the public expenditures and aid in the restoration of a sound currency, and open up before the eyes of his anxious and tax-burdened countrymen a prospect of the early reduction of the public debt by the practice of that economy which is so essential, but to which, under the republican rule, the country has been so long a stranger. Nor can I tell how far, if he should in all these things be disposed to act for his country instead of his party, he will regard his obligations to the latter paramount if they should happen to disagree with the former. He has hitherto been credited with views broader and more national than the policy of his party. Considering how immeasurably the Republican party is his debtor he can well afford to preserve his individuality. He need not sink, unless he chooses, into the mere stalking horse of party, the mere dispenser of party patronage—the gilded figure-head in a State pageant, like a doge of Venice, subject to his council of ten. If he is ambitious to crown his warlike fame with enduring civic renown he will be far more than all this. He can be more than all this without having attributed to him any special love for the party that voted against him. He will, it must be expected, give the offices to the men who voted him into the Presidency. Nor can he be expected to betray any of the pledges which his Republican candidacy have fairly imposed upon him. But he is too wise not to see that he owes to the Republican party the nomination alone. They owe him everything beside. Without him they would have been nothing, and they know it.

In view of these considerations it is compli-

mentary to him to doubt how far he will submit his official locks to be shorn by the Radical Delilah, and allow himself to be bound by the withes of the civil tenure law or by any new inventions, which upon the first exhibition of independent action on his part, Congress may deem it expedient to devise for his restriction. It would be in accordance at least with the popular conception of his character if he should defend with resolution the constitutional prerogatives of his office. If he were to imitate Congress he might even go beyond this, and become a law unto himself.

When by his official utterances the new President shall have broken his sphinx-like silence, and revealed a policy of his own, then, and not

till then, can it be safely asserted how much or how little has been accomplished by the election of General Grant.

The great constitutional and national party to which I belong, numbering in its ranks this day, notwithstanding the election of General Grant, a majority of the white people of the entire country, will continue to move on, never despairing of the Republic, faithful to its great mission and strong in its abiding convictions of right. It will never cease its efforts until, with or without the aid of General Grant, it shall behold the civil law supreme throughout the land, and this nation again united as one people with the equality, dignity, and rights of the several States reëstablished and secured.

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